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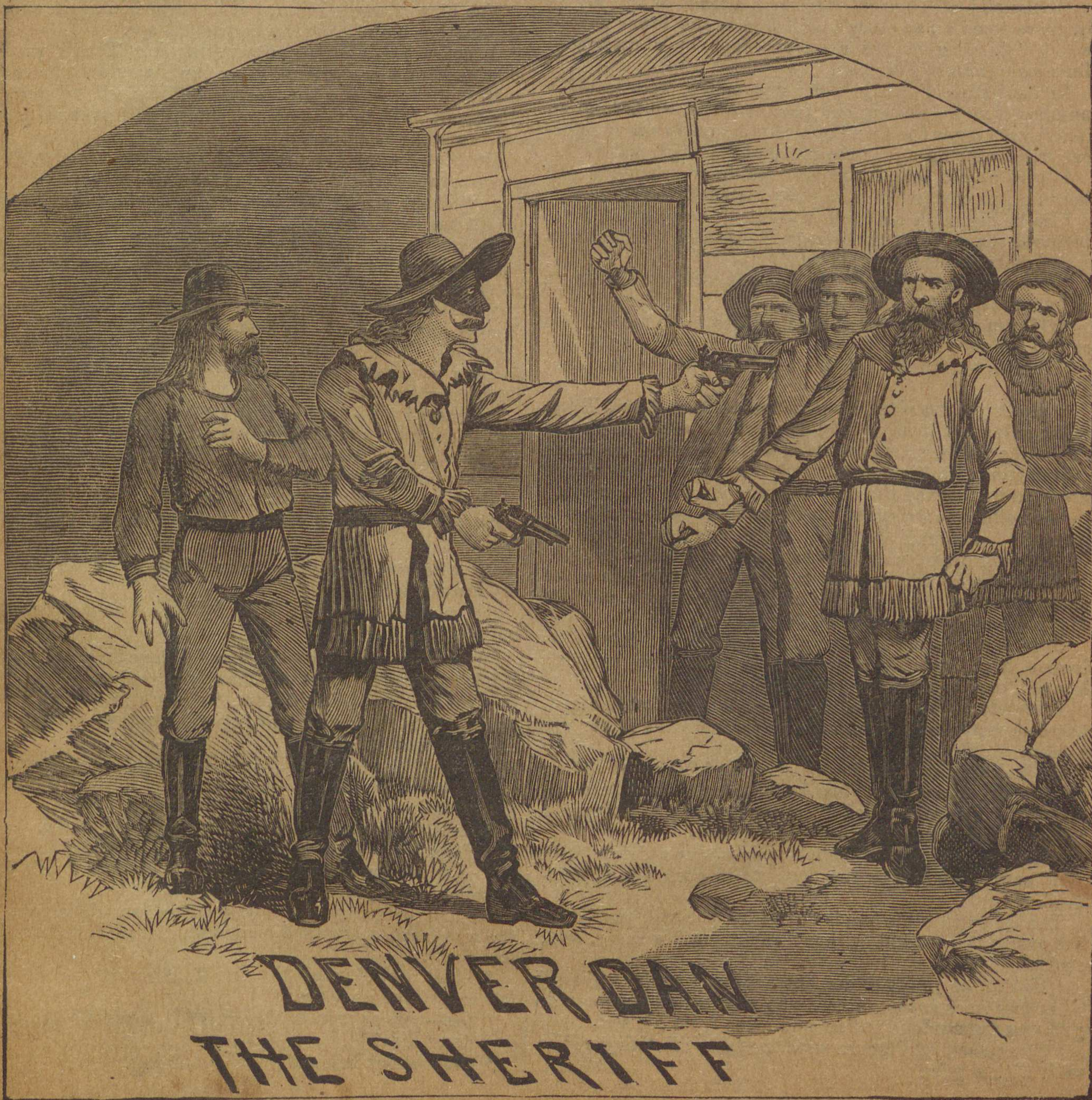
No. 1208. { COMPLETE }

FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 34 & 36 NORTH MOORE ST., N. Y.
New York, September 14, 1894.

{ PRICE }
{ 5 CENTS. }

Vol. II.

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DENVER DAN THE SHERIFF.

By "NONAME."

Author of "Denver Dan and His Mystic Band," "Denver Dan and the Road Agents," "Denver Dan and the Counterfeiters," "Denver Dan Outwitted," Etc., Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER I.

SCENES IN FLAXMAN'S PARLOR—AN EXCITED MOB—THE NEW SHERIFF CREATES A SENSATION.

IN the city of Denver, once upon a time, as the saying is, there stood a two story frame house, the lower part of which was occupied as a saloon, kept by a rosy-faced Dutchman named Flaxman.

In the "Parlor," as the place was called, were seated a number of men drinking and playing cards, while from an inner room came the sound of a rattling piano which someone was torturing under the name of playing a waltz.

It was night, and Flaxman was busy supplying the wants of his customers, who were unusually noisy.

"So hellup mein soul, off you don'd keep gwiet, I vos bounced you oud!" said the irate Dutchman. "I vas keeps a reshpectable blaces, I told you."

"Gimme a gin sling, Tony, and put plenty o' sugar in it!" roared one of the noisiest.

"Off you vas make me so much noises some more, I vas call in der sheriff."

"Sheriff be blowed! I don't give a nickle for ther sheriff."

"Maybe you vas give fifty cents for me, then," said Tony, and coming out from behind the bar, he seized the noisy reveler by the scruff of the neck, and expediting the man's movements with his enormous foot applied to the seat of his trousers, opened the door and pitched the fellow out.

"So hellup me Gristmas, maybe sompody else don'd give me some foolishness, don'd it. I vas boss in my own Parlor, I don'd dinks, und I was kept a reshpectable blaces!"

So saying, he walked back to his station with the air of one who meant to rule in his own establishment, and the din was considerably softened down.

Over in one corner sat a rough miner at least six feet four inches high, and big in proportion, who was enjoying himself hugely, after his own peculiar fashion.

Presently a little runt of a man, under five feet in hight, but compactly built, sauntered up to where the miner was sitting.

He had a segar stuck in one corner of his mouth at an oblique angle, and kept his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his rather "loud" trousers, while a shiny silk beaver sat lightly on the back of his head.

"Halloo, you pint o' baby's pap—have a drink with me!" said the miner to the diminutive specimen of mankind.

The latter took his hands out of his pockets, pushed his hat over his eyes, and without removing his segar, said, coolly:

"You're too young to die, but I suppose you're willing!"

At this speech the miner, who was called Omaha Oll, gave one tremendous guffaw and arose from his seat.

"Come here, and let me wipe the table off with yer!" he said, with a grin.

"Come and fetch me," said four feet six.

"All right, I will," answered six feet four.

He made a rush at the little fellow, but the latter drew back, squared off, and springing into the air took the big fellow on the nose.

The blow staggered him, but he rushed in again only to get another blow, this time on the left eye.

A space was cleared, notwithstanding Tony's protest that he kept a respectable place, and wouldn't have no such foolishness, and the "sawed off" danced all around the giant, putting in the blows thick and fast and never receiving one in return.

He kept his segar in his mouth the whole time, puffing away between the blows, and presently delivered one in the pit of the giant's stomach, which doubled him out upon the sanded floor.

As the little fellow walked away, still puffing at his segar, a drummer standing at the bar was heard to remark to those nearest him:

"That's Tommy Long, the boxer, from St. Louis. Knows how to handle his fists, don't he?"

"Waal, I'll be busted!" said one of the crowd. "Four-foot-six get away with six-foot-four, an' never take the butt outer his mouth!"

"I guess I ain't used to that sort o' thing," said Omaha Oll, getting up and shaking the sand from his clothes. "Ef it war a question o' gettin' the drop on a feller, ye'd find me thar every time."

They were all sitting around the table with Oll, a few minutes later, playing cards, when one of the gang said, quietly:

"Gentlemen, excuse me, but my plug o' terbacker is in my hip pocket."

"Waal," said another, Tom Sykes by name, "what of it?"

"I on'y want ter git a chaw, an' I hope no gentleman 'll think it amiss if I puts my hand around thar."

"Not a bit on it," said Tom, "s'long's ye tell us aforehand. Otherwise we might pop ye, seein' ye make a motion like that 'ere."

"Thank'ee, gentlemen," and California Ned, as he was called, procured his cherished weed and took a huge bite therefrom, replacing it in a less suspicious pocket.

Suddenly all were startled by a loud cry outside.

"Hang him—hang him!" was heard, in angry tones.

The crowd rushed out, and beheld a sheriff taking a prisoner to the jail.

He had evidently committed some terrible crime, for the mob surged around him, and wanted to lynch him then and there.

"Stand back!" yelled the sheriff, in a clear voice; "the law must take its course."

"Yes—yes, so it must, lynch law!" shrieked the mob.

"Hang him!"

"Put a bullet in him!"

"Now for a rush, boys!"

"Put a black eye on the sheriff!"

"Lynch law forever!"

"Death to the murderer!"

"Hang him—hang him—hang him!"

These and a hundred other cries rang out upon the air, and the mob was prepared to make one grand rush and secure the prisoner.

If they do, his case is a hopeless one.

"What's the matter?" asks California Ned. "Who is he, and what's he done?"

"It's Simon Hutchins, the biggest scamp in Colorado!" yelled the crowd.

"Robbed old blind Davy at the Fork, and battered his brains out with a club," said one.

"Waylaid Dan Meacham's boys and cut their throats for two dollars in gold, what they had," said another.

"Hanging's too good fur him!" yelled Omaha Oll; "blow him up with glycerine!"

"Kill him—kill him!" yelled the crowd.

They were about to make the rush when a shrill whistle was heard.

Then the sheriff was seen to have placed a black mask on his face, and stood in front of the prisoner with two revolvers leveled at the crowd.

"Do you know me?" he cried.

"Denver Dan, by hokey!" said the crowd.

"Ay, Denver Dan, sheriff! Who dares to interfere with me in the performance of my duty?"

The crowd became as silent as death, and presently a score of forms, masked like himself, stood around the sheriff, having come no one knew whence.

"This man must stand his trial, and when proven guilty suffer death," said Dan. "There is no need of lynch law if sheriffs would only attend to their business."

"Hurrah for Denver Dan, the sheriff!" yelled the excited crowd, as Dan led his prisoner away.

CHAPTER II.

VISITORS TO THE SHERIFF.

"WAAL, I'll be blowed!" said Oll. "I never knowed as Denver Dan wur the new sheriff. I knowed his name wur Dan, too, Dan'l Fleming, 'cause I see it writ onto his shingle, but cuss me ef I s'posed it wur Dan hisself."

"W'y, I've knowed Dan'l Fleming fur two year," interposed Ned, "an' I allus thort he wur a quiet, easy-goin' chap what wouldn't make much fuss, but still wouldn't be imposed upon; but, gosh! who'd thunked he wur Denver Dan, the terror o' the road-agents and thieves fur miles around?"

"Many's the time I've seen him up ter Ned Travis' store a-chattin' wi' Mary an' the old man, an' sometimes Jack," said Tom Sykes; "an' when he got spliced ter Mary Travis I went to the weddin'. An' so he's Denver Dan arter all, is he? Gosh! now he's sheriff them 'tarnal rogues 'll hev ter look out, fur he's got a big gang, an' ef he wants a feller arrested it'll be easy enough to do it on the sly wi'out anybody's knowin' anythin' about it."

Denver Dan was a man that had come to the west about ten years previous to the date of our story, and had established an organization for the purpose of punishing criminals. *

It was distinctly a secret body and no one knew who were in it but the members themselves, and only the most trusted of all knew every one, many of the members knowing but a few by sight.

There had been a few wolves in the fold, but these had

been punished so terribly that at last none but honest men were enrolled in the band.

Public morals had improved wonderfully since the band had been in existence, and more than one lawless gang had been scattered by Denver Dan and his friends.

Just before the beginning of this story he had been made a sheriff, and would have preserved his identity for a longer time had it not been that he wished to prevent a riot, for he knew that Denver Dan had a power which plain Daniel Fleming, sheriff, did not possess in such an emergency as the present.

His prisoner, Simon Hutchins, who had been caught in the very act of committing a most atrocious murder upon two little boys in the mountains, and who was suspected of other crimes, was safely lodged in jail, where we will leave him for the present and follow the fortunes of Denver Dan in his capacity of sheriff.

The next day Dan was sitting in his office when Jack Travis, one of his warmest friends, and the lieutenant of the mystic band, entered and sat down.

"Good-morning, sheriff," said Jack.

"Come—come, Jack, none of your nonsense," said Dan, laughing. "What's up? I know something is, or you wouldn't be here."

"I've got wind of that band of burglars that has been playing the mischief here for the last four or five months."

"So? That's good."

"The leader, or rather the supposed leader, is a man called Black Harry, a negro, but as sharp a man as ever you set eyes upon."

"How many are there in the gang together?"

"About a dozen."

"We must overhaul them before long. By-the-way, I have a plan."

Dan then leaned over and whispered a few words in Jack's ear, at which the latter smiled, and said it was an excellent idea, and worth working up.

What the plan was, we shall discover later on.

"I have received a letter from Chicago," continued Dan, "which tells me to look out for a murderer by the name of Oscar Hedding, who is supposed to have fled to this place."

"Have you a description of him?"

"Yes; and the officers, armed with a requisition, are expected in a day or so. I had my information by a cipher telegram."

"What is the man like?"

"Tall, dark complexion, black eyes, iron-grey hair, slightly pock-marked, strong and sinewy, and bears the initials: 'O. H.' on his right arm."

"Have you hunted for him?"

"Yes, a little; but as you are a deputy, I want you to hunt him up. I am going to follow up the burglars."

"All right. I hope you will catch them."

"I shall do my best. You had better tell Joe Darrell and Mike to be prepared to carry out your orders or mine at any moment."

"I will see them."

Then Jack withdrew, and presently a lady entered, dressed in deep mourning, and veiled.

"This is Sheriff Fleming?"

"Yes, madame."

"You are intending to arrest one Oscar Hedding for murder?"

"Such are our orders."

"What will you take to abandon the chase and throw the officers off the track?"

Dan looked up, paused a moment, and then dipping his pen into the ink, went on writing, saying, as he did so:

"This is not the day that I receive bribes, madame. You will have to call some other day."

"I will make it worth your while."

"You have had my answer."

* Read the foregoing volumes of this series for a full account of the remarkable adventures of our hero, published in Nos. 433, 436, 439 and 442 of the FIVE CENT WIDE AWAKE LIBRARY. Each story is complete in itself and of absorbing interest.

She gazed at him for several minutes in silence, and then said:

"You are incorruptible; I can see it in your face. What you will not do for money, you may do in pity. The man is my husband. I have three small children, all dependent upon him. If he is caught, we shall starve. Let him escape, I beg you!"

"You are laboring under a great mistake. Your husband is not yet in my power."

"But he will be; I can read it in your face. Permit him to escape."

"I cannot do that; my duty compels me to apprehend all evil-doers."

"Oh, you are pitiless!"

The poor woman broke down utterly, and sobbed as if her heart would break, burying her face in her hands and rocking to and fro like one deranged.

Her grief was not assumed, as Dan at first thought it might be, and going over to her, he put his hand upon her shoulder, and said:

"Madame, while I must do my duty, I am also capable of doing a kind act. Denver Dan has ever been known as the friend of the unfortunate. If your husband receives the punishment due his enormities, rest assured that you and your children shall not suffer."

"But the disgrace—the shame!"

"It is none of your making, and thus can be borne easier. Your husband may escape us, and if so, you will be better off away from him, and the community will not see you suffer on his account."

"You are kinder than I thought," said the poor woman, as she took her departure, leaving Dan to his plans.

CHAPTER III.

BLACK HARRY AND HIS BAND.

A SEEDY-LOOKING individual sat smoking a black clay pipe in the corner of a liquor saloon in Denver, unnoticed by the few who yet lingered, for it was growing late.

"You'd better clear out; I'm going to shut up," said the proprietor.

"Shut up, then; who told you to open your mouth?"

"But you'll have to git."

"Where to?"

"Into the street."

"I can't sleep in the street, and I ain't got a job."

"What's your business?"

"I'm a mechanic, I am, a boss locksmith. Ye can't show me a lock that I can't pick."

At this the saloon keeper winked to a large, red-whiskered man who stood near.

"Do you want a job at picking locks?" said this man, coming over to where the mechanic sat.

"Are you got one for me?"

"I know of one if you're a good man—what's your name?"

"Josh Jones, from Cleveland, Ohio; the town got too hot fur me, 'cause I opened another man's door by mistake."

The red-whiskered man bent over and whispered in the other's ear:

"If ye ain't afeared o' crib crackins' I kin give ye a job. You'll keep dark?"

"As a nigger," answered Josh. "I ain't hed a chance to be honest, an' I've got ter live, ye know."

"If ye don't mean biz we'll cut yer throat fur ye, durned quick, understand?"

"Oh, I'm solid, I am, I don't squeal. Didn't I git hunted out of Carson city, fur makin' too free with what wasn't mine? Ye can't scare me, fur I kin handle a pop as quick as the next man, and when I'm mad, I'm wuss'n chain lightning."

"Come with me, and I'll get yer a job. A friend o' mine has got suthin' on hand to-night."

"I'm yer oyster every time, pard."

The two went out into the street, and presently the red-bearded man led Josh through a dark alley into a tumble-down house, down a flight of stone steps, and then opening a door, halted in a large, low-ceiled room, evidently a cellar.

"Ye ain't easily scared, be ye?" asked the guide.

"Wull, I guess not."

"'Cause there's a dog in the corner over thar asleep, an' ef he chance to wake up he might fly at yer. He don't fancy strangers."

"Let him fly. I reckon I kin take a pup's eye out with my little shooter, runnin' or walkin'." I don't want more'n a second to do it in, nuther, arter I sets eyes onto him. That's me, that is."

"He won't hurt ye onless yer scared."

"Scared be blowed! I ain't one o' that sort."

"Jest wait here a minute, an' I'll get a light. Don't ye move 'cause there holes what you'll fall inter."

The place was quite dark, and Josh was left alone for a few moments, the guide's retreating footsteps soon being inaudible.

Suddenly the whole place was lit up with a glare of light, and not four feet away from Josh stood a man with a revolver aimed at his head.

"Fire!" cried a voice.

Josh had his own revolver in his hand in a second, and before the man could fire, had sent a bullet crashing through the latter's brain.

The man fell without a groan, and on the instant a number of men dressed as United States marshals rushed in, and presented their weapons at his head.

"Surrender!" they all cried.

"What fur?" said Josh.

"You are an outlaw."

Josh made no answer.

"We know you are a cracksman," said the leader of the party, "but we will spare you on one condition."

"What's that?"

"That you betray your comrades."

"Then count me out every time. There's a dozen on ye, but I ain't afeared, an' I'm goin' ter shoot when I count six ef ye don't git."

"You have murdered a man, and will swing for it!"

"Didn't he p'int his shooter at me? Wull, d'ye s'pose I war goin' ter let him hev fust shot? No, siree, not by a jugful!"

"You won't tell who your companions are?"

"No."

"You won't show us the way to the place where they meet?"

"I'll see you ——— first!"

"We'll fire if you don't."

"Fire away; I ain't scared!"

The men took aim, as did Josh, but in another instant the red-whiskered man rushed in and cried out:

"That's all right. He's solid!"

Then going up to Josh, as the men turned away, he said:

"We was only foolin' ye, Josh, ter see what sort o' stuff you's made of. That feller you shot war only a dummy, an' these fellers is all in the gang."

"Ye doesn't find much squeal in me, do yer?"

"Not a mite; you're sound as a dollar."

"Ye can gamble on that, pard; but, I say, what's yer handle; what do they call ye when they want ye ter come to grub?"

"Me?"

"Yas, you."

"What's my name, yer mean?"

"Yas."

"My name's Blue Dick, an' the boss is called Black Harry."

"Give us yer fist, old Blue! I've been a-wantin' ter get inter respectable company fur a long while. This yer is Black Harry's gang, is it?"

"Yes."

"Then set 'em up fur Black Harry, an' gimme a chance ter shake his paw. I'se a roarer, I is, an' ef ye want any crackin' done jest call on me."

At this moment a door was thrown open, and a tall man, with fine features, but a face as black as night, entered.

"Is he true?" asked this man.

"Yes."

"Then welcome to Black Harry's band, for you are one of us." And Josh Jones was immediately enrolled.

CHAPTER IV.

BLACK HARRY AND HIS GANG AT WORK.

AN hour later four men might have been seen, although they were not, and did not desire to be, stealing cautiously up to an elegant residence in the most fashionable quarter of Denver.

These men were burglars, and were Josh Jones, the newly-initiated member, Black Harry and two others.

Josh proved to be an expert with the center bit, and soon had one of the panels of the lower door removed.

He and the leader, who, although jet black, had regular features, more like a Caucasian than a negro, entered the house, leaving the others to keep watch outside.

Black Harry seemed to know where everything was kept, and he at once went to the iron safe which the two men opened, Josh soon discovering the combination, seeming to be very familiar with safes and how to open them.

Black Harry had a heavy sack, and into this all the articles of value were placed, Josh handing them out and making a note of everything on a card he had in his hand.

"It's allus best to know what you have on hand," said he, "for ye knows well enough, Harry, old pard, that it sometimes pays to give things up, an' no questions axed."

"You're a cool hand, Josh," answered the other. "No wonder you had to leave your last quarters."

The last thing of any value was handed out, and the men were about to make for the door, when a tremendous ring at the front door-bell was heard.

Burglars always resort to this plan to warn the "insiders" that the police are about, and although the inmates are apt to be aroused, it is always better to run that risk than to have the police pounce upon the "pals" in the house.

"The 'outsiders' on watch had been suddenly alarmed by the sound of a shrill whistle, and the appearance of a masked man in their midst.

"Denver Dan!" they yelled, and made tracks at once.

Not before they had given the alarm to those inside, however, and Harry and Josh profited by it upon the instant.

One of the villains outside ran into the arms of Dan's men, but the other, he who had pulled the bell, showing fight and wounding one of the vigilants, was shot dead as he attempted to force his way to freedom.

"Every man for himself," said Harry. "I wonder how the mischief they spotted us."

"Don't give up the swag," cried Josh, dragging the heavy bag along the hallway.

"Drop it, man, drop it," yelled Harry, as he broke open the rear outside door, "you will be taken."

"Not a bit of it!" cried Josh, following Harry and dragging the bag after him.

The people in the house were alarmed, voices were heard calling out to know what was the matter, shots were fired, and then lights began to gleam in every passage.

Black Harry flew over the fence, dashed across an adjoining garden, over another fence, down an alley, and finally reached an obscure street, and got away in safety.

Josh threw the bag of silver down a well, and followed the advice, though not the course, of Black Harry, being soon beyond the reach of pursuit.

The next day the whole city was in a state of excitement over another daring burglary, and people began asking themselves if this thing was never going to be stopped.

The next night there was a meeting of the gang of burglars, Black Harry presiding.

Josh Jones was not present, and fears were being entertained of his safety when he suddenly appeared.

"Send three fellers down ter Deadman's lane," he said, "an' let 'em fetch what they find under a heap of rubbish at the head of it."

The men were dispatched to the place mentioned, one of the most disreputable places in the city at that time, although it no longer exists, having been built over.

In half an hour they returned with a heavy sack, which, when opened, was found to contain the very stuff stolen the night before.

"Hurrah for Josh Jones!" said Black Harry, "he's a trump, and the best man we've had for a long time."

"So he is!" roared all the men together.

"I'll tell yer what it is, captin'," remarked Josh, "we'd better stow that 'ere stuff away till the matter blows over, for I hev diskivered that everyone on them pieces has been listed, an' the perlice cautioned ter watch fur 'em."

"They didn't get your list?"

"You bet they didn't," and the burglar produced it, and handed it over to Black Harry.

"That's all right, I'll keep it. That fellow they caught last night hasn't given us away, has he?"

"No, an' better nor that, I'm a-goin' ter get him out'er the caboose in a few days."

"Good for you."

"I know how I kin work it," muttered Josh.

In a couple of days the man was free, Josh having effected his release, though in what manner he would not state.

The man had been shaven and shorn while in prison, but still all who knew him recognized him, and congratulated him on his having Josh Jones for a friend.

"An' I'll stick to him as long's I live," answered the man, who was none other than Blue Dick, "for he's made of the right stuff!"

CHAPTER V.

DENVER DAN TURNS UP UNEXPECTEDLY.

JACK TRAVIS, the lieutenant of the Mystic Band, had a cousin named Halbert Barstow, usually called Hal for short, a young fellow of about twenty-one, who had originally lived in the east, but had spent a good deal of his time for the last five years, when not in college, in visiting his friends in the west, having for a time, when a boy, been the hero of several exciting scenes in and around Denver.*

Hal was now once more in the silver mining regions, and about two weeks after the events narrated in the last chapter was prospecting not far from where Ned Travis had his store.

Near where he was working was a deep mountain stream with high banks, which at a little distance away entered a vaulted passage or cave in the rocks and was lost to sight.

Hal was busy with his pick, when a man suddenly appeared in front of him, and demanded that he should leave the place at once and give up all he had discovered or be shot through the head.

"What for?" asked the young fellow.

*Read "Denver Dan Outwitted; or, the Outlaw's Triumph."

"Because I say so," was the blunt rejoinder.

"That's not reason enough," answered Hal, striking another blow with his pick.

The man drew a revolver and fired a shot at Hal, making a hole through the top of his hat.

Hal threw his pick at the man, taking aim in the shins, and bringing him to the ground.

Then before the fellow could get on his feet Hal had covered him with his revolver.

"Clear out of this, or you are a dead man," he said.

The villain made a dash at the young miner, and the latter pulled the trigger.

Snap!

One of the chambers was empty and the weapon was not discharged.

In another instant both men had grappled and were trying to throw each other down.

They reeled and staggered, and a loose stone rolling from under their feet, precipitated them into the water.

The stream was not only deep, but rapid, and in an instant they were borne along on its swift current.

When they arose to the surface they had entered the cavern, through which the stream was taking them at a furious rate.

It was soon as dark as night, and the speed of the current seemed to have increased.

Only a slight decline in the bed would cause this, but as they were swept onward, they seemed to be in a rapid, almost.

There must have been a very sudden declension in the rocky bottom to have caused this, and neither knew how much more it might increase.

They were likely, all of a sudden, to be precipitated over some dizzy height when the stream should at last escape from its underground prison.

They had released their hold one upon the other, and were floating swiftly down close together, but each free to act as he chose.

The most utter darkness prevailed, and there was no way of judging how high the roof of the cavern was above their heads, or how soon the place might be completely filled with water.

"Who are you?" asked Hal, at length, as he kept himself afloat by a simple movement of his hands.

"Roy the Robber, the sworn enemy to you, and all like you."

"I do not know you, and never even heard of you."

"I know you and hate you. You belong to the band of Denver Dan."

"Suppose I do?"

"I have sworn to kill all such."

"How do you know whether I belong to his band or not?"

"I have got you all marked. One of your men has given me all the names."

"It is false. No one but the leaders know them."

"You are one?"

"I shall not tell you if I am or not. I don't believe you know anything."

"Hark, do you hear that?"

"Yes."

"Do you know what it is?"

"The roar of a cataract."

"Yes. Look! what do you see?"

"A ray of light."

"The mouth of the cavern is ahead of us. The stream makes a plunge of thirty feet. I know the place well."

There was silence for awhile, the light in the meantime growing brighter.

"You will be hurled upon the rocks below and dashed to pieces," muttered Roy.

"You will meet with the same fate."

"It matters not. I shall at least have deprived Denver Dan of one of his strongest allies."

"I am but one; there are others, stronger and better than I. The band will not suffer by my death."

"You do not know."

Just then the stream became more rapid, the fall being now not far away, and the waters rushed on more madly than ever, feeling the approaching plunge, as it seemed.

The light was now quite strong, and Hal was swept relentlessly onward, without the power to save himself.

He managed to keep his head above water, and that was all, but even this was some comfort.

In another moment he will be dashed over the rocks and fall into the whirlpool below, to lose his life among the whirling eddies, or be dashed to pieces upon the black boulders.

He utters one prayer for help, and is then dashed by the stream into the open air.

He throws up his arms wildly, as drowning men catch at straws.

Roy the Robber screams for help, and is hurled headlong with the rapid current down upon the rocks below.

His body is tossed hither and thither, the sport of the foaming waters, while the stream is crimsoned with his blood.

And Hal?

Has he, too, shared the same horrible fate?

Not so.

As he was swept onward his hands caught the overhanging branches of a stout tree growing on the very verge of the torrent.

With the despair of death he clings to the branch; and as the waters lift him into the air he draws himself higher into the tree, beyond their reach.

There he hangs, however, unable to make another effort, and fearing every moment to lose his hold and fall into the stream.

Is there no help at hand?

He cannot hold on there much longer, and unless assistance comes, must certainly perish.

He can climb no higher, and is likely to slip back to where the water will reach him.

It is a terrible situation.

Suddenly a thought strikes him.

Throwing his right arm over the branch, which is even now threatening to snap, he thrusts his left hand into his shirt and draws out a silver whistle.

In a moment it is between his lips, and a peculiar call sounds upon the air.

It is not the shrill whistle which Dan's followers know so well, but one with a trill in it like that of a bird.

Once more he sounds the call, and then an answer comes.

It is the whistle of Denver Dan himself!

"Hold on a moment!" shouts a voice.

Some one is on the rocks above him, and pretty soon a noose falls over his shoulders.

Releasing one arm, he permits the loop to slip under it.

Then the branch, already severely strained, snaps in two.

Too late, though, for in a second Hal is drawn up and lies exhausted upon the rocks above.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIGHT IN THE DEVIL'S GULCH.

It was some few minutes before Hal recovered, but a dash of water over his face and a few drops of brandy poured down his throat soon revived him.

He looked up and saw the masked face of Denver Dan gazing kindly into his.

"You're always on time, Dan," said Hal, "I don't know what I should do without you."

The masked man suddenly bent over and whispered a few words in Hal's ear.

"Is that so? Then I'll get right back to town. Have you a horse?"

Dan pointed to the path a few feet away and then whistled.

A glad neigh was the answer, showing that a horse was hitched there.

Hal shook the water out of his dripping garments, and mounting the noble steed, darted off down the mountain side.

Dan rode to a place called the Devil's Gulch, after having first procured a horse, that of Roy the Robber, which he found in the path near where Hal had been first attacked.

The Gulch was a wild place and very deep, many persons having lost their lives in attempting to reach the bottom.

Dan knew the locality well, however, and had been down more than once.

Securing his horse, he suddenly sounded a low whistle, and in a moment ten men were at his side.

"Now to seek the enemy in his den!"

He immediately began making the descent by aid of a rope and projecting tree trunks.

The men followed him rapidly, not one falling, and in the course of about fifteen minutes they all stood together at the bottom.

Overhead, the sky could scarcely be seen, the stars being visible in what little there was.

A silence as of the grave brooded over the place, and all around were the whitening bones of men who had lost their lives here.

It was whispered that more than one person had been thrown down here by outlaws, the spot having a bad name.

It was said to be the resort of a most lawless band of robbers, and report said true.

Dan knew this, and was also aware that a part of the band was at that moment holding a secret meeting in a cave leading from the lowest depths of the ravine.

He and his men were all thoroughly armed, and wore heavy woollen socks over their boots, so as to make no sound.

When they were all down, Dan drew his revolver and advanced into the mouth of the cave, stepping across a little stream that babbled among the rocks.

Into the darkness the daring men made their way, not a sound breaking the stillness, and in a few moments they reached a wooden door, set right across the path.

Upon this Dan rapped three times with the butt of his revolver.

It was opened a few inches, and a voice said:

"Who is there?"

"Those who have the right to enter," answered Dan.

"Your names?"

"Our deeds proclaim them."

"That is not enough. I must know who you are."

"I am called Denver Dan, and am the sheriff of the county. I demand an entrance."

The man uttered a cry of alarm, and tried to close the door.

Dan fired through the opening, and struck the man in the shoulder.

Then bursting the door open, in he rushed in an instant, followed by all his men, revolvers in hand.

A dozen or twenty men sat about a rude table in a circular cavern, dimly lit by pine knots, which sputtered and snapped and threw a lurid light upon the unwonted scene.

"Surrender!" cried Dan, making a rush upon the outlaws.

They jumped to their feet and poured a volley into the enemy's ranks.

It was answered with most deadly effect, four of the villains expiring upon the instant, and others being badly wounded.

Dan sprang at the leader, and knocking him down, clapped a pair of handcuffs upon his wrists.

The men of the Mystic Band were now engaged in a desperate fight with the outlaws, their aim seeming to be capture, however, and not slaughter.

Several more were killed in the struggle, and two of the vigilants lost their lives at the same time.

"I kin smell blood," said one sorry-looking villain with but one eye, "and this place ain't healthy."

"Larry the Wolf!" cried Dan. "Seize him by all means!"

But Larry—for it was indeed that battle-scarred outlaw who spoke—was already in the passage, and firing several shots at Dan and his men, he hastily retreated.

This villain, whom Dan had long attempted to catch, had not been seen in the vicinity for three or four years, and was thought to be dead.

His well-known expression had betrayed him, and instantly chase was made for him.

First, however, the prisoners had to be secured, those that survived having surrendered, and then the whole party sallied out into the open air, leaving the dead behind.

What was the disappointment of the officers to see no signs of the Wolf in any direction.

He could not have reached the top by this time, and there were no known recesses into which he could have crawled.

A thorough search was made, torches being lit and thrust behind rocks and the stumps, but without discovering the ugly villain.

"Let us return to the cave," said Dan; "there must be treasure concealed in it."

This was found to be true, for hidden away in deep recesses were many articles of value, all of which had been stolen by the gang under Black Harry, and which were identified by a list which the vigilant held in his hand.

Black Harry himself was not present at the meeting, and Dan was disappointed, evidently, at not finding him.

The valuables were all packed up into bundles, and then the return to the upper air was made, the prisoners being bound and dragged up by Dan's men, who had all been appointed as special police.

When half-way up the steep bank a bullet came crashing through the leaves, and missing Dan, for whom it had evidently been intended, struck one of the prisoners, killing him instantly.

"Ha—ha! Denver Dan won't trouble the Wolf any more," said a voice, which all knew.

When the top was reached the outlaw had fled, and the party at once set out for Denver.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BATTLE IN THE CELLAR.

At the same time that the contest between the outlaws and the vigilants was taking place in the ravine, an equally exciting scene was enacting in the cellar used by the band of Black Harry as a rendezvous.

Here were gathered the remainder of the band with Harry himself and Josh Jones included.

"Things are getting lively for us," said Harry, "and I am afraid that the best move we can make is to get out of here as soon as possible, and join the rest of the gang."

"What'll ye do?" said Blue Dick, whose long, red beard had most unaccountably grown to its former proportions.

"Travel to some place where we are not known. Sheriff Denver Dan has hauled up more than one of our gang, and is fast thinning us out."

"How is it!" said one of the men, "that all the new members are safe? They never git cotched, while the old fellers allus git yanked in. There's Josh Jones an' Slim

Jim and Handy Bob and three or four more. They never git into trouble."

"Do ye know why?" asked Josh. "It's 'cause we're too smart! I'd like ter see Denver Dan cotch me, I would."

"Nobody shall say a word against Josh or the friends he has brought in," spoke up Black Harry. "They are good men, all of them."

"Why do they never get nabbed when fellers that is with 'em allus gets pulled in?" persisted the man, who was one of the disaffected members of the band.

"'Cause we've got our wits about us," said Blue Dick.

"I'd like ter know how yer b'ard, what was shaved cluss to yer face three weeks ago, ha's growed so long ag'in?" said the man who had already spoken.

"Yours wouldn't come out so soon, would it?"

"No."

"Do you want ter know why?"

"Yes."

"'Cause yer ain't got brains enough ter make it. A feller what knows as much as me, kin raise four or five crops o' h'ar while sech pups as ye is raisin' one."

"Don't ye call me a pup, or I'll pull yer liver out," yelled the man, rushing upon Dick.

"No more of this!" yelled Harry. "Silence, Ned, we've got to be harmonious or we'll all be nabbed!"

Josh had rushed up to keep Ned from Dick, but already the mischief had been done.

Suddenly a shrill cry broke from the lips of all:

"A traitor—a spy! Kill him!"

What had caused this sudden commotion?

Ned had rushed upon Blue Dick, and seizing him by his long red beard, had pulled it entirely from his face.

A second movement served to reveal the fact that the man wore a wig also, and that his own hair was black.

Dick struck the man a blow in the face that sent him reeling to the floor.

He was knocked insensible, but not before he had time to cry out:

"That is Joe Darrell, one of Dan's best men."

"A spy—a spy!" they all roared. "Death to the spy!"

"So I am Joe Darrell!" shouted the man, one of Denver Dan's bravest followers, drawing two immense navy revolvers from his pockets and covering the crowd. "Come on, you villains!"

The men made a rush at him, but just then a shrill whistle was heard.

"Ha! Denver Dan's signal," cried one. "Look out for squalls!"

In another instant, to the astonishment of everyone, Denver Dan himself was seen standing in their midst.

"Upon him!" shouted Harry. "Shoot him down!"

The whistle was again sounded, and the door was burst open by a party of men at whose head was a man with long, flowing hair, slouched hat and a half mask over his face, beneath which was a tawny mustache.

"Denver Dan!" yelled the men, as the new-comer rushed in.

"How many lives has Denver Dan got?" said Black Harry.

Suddenly Slim Jim and Handy Bob were transformed into Hal Barstow and Jim Dunn, the latter a member of the Inner Circle of Dan's band.

They rushed to their leader's side, he having just seized Black Harry by the throat.

The fight became general and waged hot and fast, many of the burglars being killed.

"Aha, Denver Dan!" yelled Ned, who had arisen to his feet, "you won't crow over us long, I kin tell ye."

Suddenly Dan, if he it was, threw off his mask.

"Faix, I'm not Dan at all, ye spalpeen," he cried, being none other than the dashing Mike Holcraft. "Come on, ye villain, I'm only Mike, but I belave I'm good enough for ye."

With that he knocked the man off his feet with one blow of his powerful fist, and set up a shout which would have been worthy of Donnybrook.

In an instant he had the villain handcuffed and powerless to resist, and then turned his attention to the other Dan.

Where was Josh Jones, the redoubtable cracksman?

Nowhere to be seen.

Dan had quickly overpowered Black Harry, and the other villains being also captured—a few having escaped—all were taken from the cellar and carried to jail.

"Where is Josh?" said Harry.

"There is no Josh!" said Dan, suddenly removing his mask; "I am Josh. Harry, you are betrayed!"

"Curse you!" was all the man said.

CHAPTER VIII.

BLACK HARRY RETIRES FROM BUSINESS.

A WORD of explanation will not be out of place.

The reader will recollect that Dan told Jack Travis that Black Harry must be captured, and then gave him the details of a plan of action.

That plan will now be unfolded.

Dan had formerly been cashier of a bank in the east, and in the way of business, had learned to be a practical mechanic, besides being an excellent mimic.

In the disguise of Josh Jones he had been admitted to the burglar's cellar.

He had given instructions to the police concerning the attempted plunder of the dwelling where he and Harry were surprised.

Being a good mechanic, he had no trouble in entering the house and opening the safe, showing how easy a job it is to "beat the combination," if one only knows enough.

He had done all this so that he might obtain the confidence and good-will of Black Harry, and succeeded.

When Blue Dick was arrested, he was kept in prison, and Joe Darrell substituted in his place, Dan thus always having a friend with him.

Hal Barstow, Jimmy Dunn and others of Dan's band were brought into the gang of Black Harry, and thus all the secrets of the latter organization were discovered.

Dan always gave information beforehand of the places to be robbed, and thus it happened that he and his friends invariably got away, while Harry's men were captured.

Dan had lists of everything stolen made out, and as the articles were always stored away, he was able to return all the missing property after the band was broken up.

"But how could Dan be in the Devil's Gulch and in the cellar at the same time?" the reader may ask.

Dan was not in the Devil's Gulch at all.

He who appeared to be Dan was no less a personage than Jack Travis, to whom Dan had entrusted that part of the business.

The men under his leadership, even, did not know that he was not Dan.

The sheriff had learned that nearly all the treasure was deposited in the Devil's Gulch and had sent Jack to fetch it, while some of the men were holding a meeting relative to leaving the country.

It was Jack who had saved Hal Barstow from death, and he had whispered the young man to join Dan at once, in the cellar, as every good man would be needed, an attack being planned for that very afternoon.

It was Mike Holcraft, disguised as Denver Dan, that appeared at the time when Blue Dick was arrested, and the doughty Irishman had personated his leader more than once, under instructions.

Thus it was that Dan inspired such terror among his foes, seeming to be everywhere at once, when, in fact, three or four people were doing his work under his disguise.

The villains were all finally caged and the stolen property recovered; but Dan still had work to do, and we will now follow him in his further adventures.

Jack had informed him that Larry the Wolf was about, and a number of deputies were despatched to scour the country and bring him in dead or alive.

Larry was not caught, but a miner was found whose son Larry had that very day murdered and robbed.

The man, Gilbert Derry by name, self-styled: "The honestest man in Colorado," had come upon the villain just as the dastardly deed had been done, and Larry barely escaped with his life. The struggle added another to his numerous disfigurements, Derry opening one side of the rascal's face with a blow from his sharp-edged shovel, and cutting a deep gash in his left shoulder with the same dangerous weapon.

Had he been provided with a pistol he would have shot the wretch dead, but unfortunately he was without that useful article, and Larry escaped, although very badly handled.

A price was set upon his head, and it would have fared hard with him if captured.

With his usual luck, however, he escaped, making his way down into Texas, and thence into Mexico, where he joined a party of cattle thieves, with whom, for the present, we will leave him.

Black Harry was sitting in his cell, two days after his capture, when the door was opened, and Dan and the jailer entered, looking grave.

"I think I know you now," said Dan; "pull up your right sleeve."

The man refused, when the jailer, seizing him in his strong grasp, literally tore the shirt from his back.

"Do you see any marks on his arm?" asked Dan.

"Yes, sir; the letters O. H. in India ink."

"That's enough. It is Oscar Hedding, the murderer!" Harry's face turned pale, despite its swarthy color.

"I am not Oscar Hedding!" he said. "Those letters stand for 'Old Harry,' a name given me in the West Indies where I was born, on account of my bad character."

"That won't do," said Dan. "I have a description of Oscar Hedding, and I propose to let you hear the main points, and compare them with your own description."

"I tell you I am not Oscar Hedding."

"And I tell you that you are. Jailer, call assistance and hold this villain. I have an experiment to perform."

The wretch was rendered helpless, and then Dan applied some diluted chemicals to the man's face.

In half an hour it was completely white.

Only a few lines in the corners of his nose and under his eyes, showed that his face had ever been other than white.

His whole body had been stained with a dye which would not wash off, and which nothing but wear or some chemical could remove.

"Now you are a white man again," said Dan, "let us see how you correspond to the description of Oscar Hedding."

Then taking a printed slip from his pocket, the sheriff continued, as follows:

"Tall, dark-complexioned and black eyes. That's all right. Iron grey hair; we will have to wash that dye off, Harry, and then I guess that will be all right, too. I can see the grey at the roots. You haven't used your bottle of hair dye, lately, I guess."

"Curse you!" growled the man.

"That's all right. I've heard you say that before. Let's see, what else is there? Slightly pock-marked. Ha-ha, you did have the small-pox, didn't you, Harry? Perhaps you will call those marks bullet wounds or scratches."

"Curse you!"

"Yes—yes, you've already said that; find something else. Strong and sinewy they call you. So you are. That,

with the letters on your arm, completes the description. You are Oscar Hedding, are you not?"

"No!"

"Ah! Wait a moment!"

Dan stepped outside, and in a few minutes returned with a lady, the same one that had visited him in his office and tried to bribe him.

He opened the door, and she, seeing the prisoner, rushed up to him, and threw her arms about his neck.

"Oscar!" she cried. "At last I behold you once more!"

"Curse you for a chattering wench!" growled the man, with an oath. "You have betrayed me by your foolishness!"

He threw the woman from him, and suddenly snatching Dan's pistol out of his belt, presented it at his own head, and fired.

They raised him up, but he had only time to glare at them, mutter:

"Curse you!" between his teeth, before he fell back a corpse.

The poor woman swooned, and in that condition was carried from the cell, while the jailer threw his coat over the murderer's face, and locked the door as he went out.

CHAPTER IX.

MIKE HOLCRAFT ASTONISHED—A YOUNG DETECTIVE AT WORK.

THREE or four days after the death of Black Harry, or Oscar Hedding, as he had formerly been known, Mike Holcraft was passing along one of the streets in the poorer quarter of Denver, when he suddenly came upon this sign:

R I L E E.

CHINESE LAUNDRY. WORK DONE AT THE CHEAPEST RATE.

Come in.

The sign was displayed in front of a small shop, in the one window of which hung a red curtain.

On the doorposts were pasted long strips of red paper, covered with black characters, in imitation of those on tea-chests, and looking something like Chinese words.

A veritable Chinaman would have laughed at them, but Mike looked at them in admiration, and then gazed into the little shop, where several women were ironing shirts on a long board.

"Be Gob!" muttered Mike, "I'll be shot if that isn't me ould frind, Paddy Reilly himself! Come out o' that, ye gossoon!"

At that moment a man dressed in a Chinese blouse and trousers, and wearing felt-soled shoes, his head shaven except on top, where a tuft of the most fiery red hair stood straight on end, like a beacon, came to the door, wiping his face with a towel.

A Chinaman with red hair—but, worse than that, a tough, red beard of three days' growth, and a fierce, red nose, was too much for Mike's gravity, and he laughed until his sides ached.

"Be gob! an' is it ye, Paddy Reilly, from the bogs av Oireland, turned haythin?" said Mike. "Faix, I'm ashamed av yez!"

"Whisper, Mike, darlint," said the Irish Chinaman; "don't say nothin' about it. Isn't it all in the way av business?"

"Business, is it?"

"Yis. Me ould woman war gittin' rin out intoirely wid the Chinayses—the dirty haythins—an' she that did be doin' up the shirts av the quality. They war all lavin' her, whin I says to her, says I: 'Faix, Bridget, darlint, I'll tarn Chinese mesilf, an' thin ye'll see phat'll be afther happenin'.'"

"You a Chineese?" said Mike, in disgust. "Bogob, ye're as Irish as Paddy's shirt. Ye a haythin, begorra! Why don't yez say ye're a Turk?"

"Be the poiper, I'd turn Turk, thin, av it wud do me any good. Whist now, till I tell yez how it all come about. I hed the tap o' me hid shaved off, an' pit an the pittycots, called mesilf Ri Lee frim Hong Kong, an' be gorrah, luk at the differ!"

"Ye luk loike a conumdrum—a what-is-it, an' not loike Paddy Reilly at all, begorrah. Yer own grandmother's pig w'uldn't know ye, be the same token."

"Whist now, Moike, till I'll be afther tellin' yez all of it. From me woife bein' able wanst to do all the work herself, faix, don't we now have foive gurruls an' a bye hard at work from mornin' foreninst the sun goes down?"

"An' is it money yez makin', Paddy?"

"Money is it, avick? Sure me own Bridget niver puts hand to a flat these days, at all; but sits on the roof a takin' her comfit like a leddy, while I dhraws the custom."

"Begob, av ye kipt an undhertaker's shop, ye moight, Paddy; but don't ye be talkin' nonsense till a sensible mon like mesilf, or I'll bat both eyes av ye into wan!"

"Niver moind, Moike, darlint, if ye'll be comin' here to tay some night an' see the illigint vitals we have to ate, ye'll be goin' into the Chinee laundry business yersilf, an' divil a word o' lie."

"Me, is it? Faix I'll be goin' crazy first. Get out of that, ye onnatheral haythin, or I'll make the sickest-lukin Chinayser av ye that iver ye see."

Mike raised his brawny fist as if to paralyze his recreant countryman, but the latter quickly retreated, and filling his mouth with water from a bowl, rushed out again and gave Mike the full benefit of it.

Then he ran back, laughing as if to split himself, while Mike spluttered and shook himself, all the while soundly berating the "blundherin' fool av a Chinayse Irishman."

While engaged in this business, a veritable Chinaman, drunk as a lord, staggered up against him and nearly tumbled him into the gutter.

"Hi ya, me allee same Melican man!" yelled the Celestial, in a maudlin sort of way. "Dlunk like hellee—go on splee—tightee like blick. Hi ya!"

"Blast yer skin, ye almond-eyed leper!" shouted Mike. "Isn't it bad enough to foind me ould friend Paddy Reilly turned Chinayser, widout runnin' agin the ginniwine article? Make tracks, ye yaller moonface, or I'll paralyze ye. Begob, the Chinayse must go!"

Instead of going, however, the inebriated denizen of the Central Flowery Kingdom walked right into Mike's stomach and doubled him up, at the same time whispering in remarkably good English:

"Keep your eye peeled, Mike, for the real Blue Dick. He's broken jail and we're after him. It's Hal, don't ye know me?"

It was the young man sure enough, and he had been looking for Mike all the morning, and but for the latter's having stopped to see Paddy Reilly, would have missed him.

"Whist, Hal, darlint, is it ye that's in it?" said Mike. "Begoroah, Dan himself will be turnin' Chinee nixt. Faix, ye're fur all the wurruld loike yer Cousin Jack whin he war a bye. He'd be a naygur wan minnit an' an Injun the nixt an' betune toimes wud pertind to be Dan hisself so natherally as to take us all in."

"'Sh! someone's coming," whispered Hal. "I'll be off, though I won't go far from the neighborhood, as I fancy our man is in it."

"All right, Masther Hal, good luck till ye," said Mike, and then, as he moved away, adding in a loud tone:

"Get out, ye dirty haythen! Isn't it bad enough to stale the empl'yment av a dacint woman, widout gittin' dhrunk into the bargain. Be off wid ye, or I'll make Chinayse hash av ye!"

Mike moved away and Hal staggered up the street, finally bringing up on a bench outside a butcher's and near-

ly opposite the establishment of the Milesian Celestial, Ri Lee.

He lay here, apparently drunk, but all the time keeping a sharp lookout, when presently from the garret window of the Irishman's he saw a man's head emerge carefully.

The man's hair and beard were jet black, but Hal was not deceived by that.

He took a good survey and then muttered to himself:

"Blue Dick, by all that's mysterious. I'll land you yet, my uneasy fish, or my name's not Hal Barstow!"

CHAPTER X.

A BATTLE OF WORDS IN THE LAUNDRY OFFICE.

AFTER the death of Oscar Hedding, Dan, as he had promised, saw that the unfortunate wife of the murderer did not suffer.

He procured a situation as housekeeper for her, with a large sheep farmer in California, paying the passage of herself and children.

At his advice, the lady resumed her maiden name, and not a soul suspected who she was, nor that the quiet, busy little woman and her three merry children, had once been in such sore shame and distress.

We will simply say in passing, that in the course of a year or so, the *ranchero* grew so fond of her as to make her his wife, and that she is now one of the happiest women in the west.

This was only one instance of Dan's kindness, the occasions upon which he assisted the unfortunate in the most substantial manner being almost numberless.

While he could be tender, he could also be severe, and, as sheriff, was greatly dreaded by the lawless part of the community.

Blue Dick had escaped and Dan was determined to catch him, and therefore had enlisted Hal and one or two others of his band as special detectives.

As Dick's escape was an ingenious one, it will be as well to state here how it was effected, before we proceed to detail the efforts put forth to secure his return to the city prison.

While in jail he was not permitted to see any friends, but various things were sent up to him, after having been inspected by the keepers.

Among other things were several bunches of segars, and after the jailer had helped himself liberally the rest were given to Dick.

In the middle of each bunch was a segar, which, when opened, was found to contain a delicate file or saw, and luckily for Dick, enough of these were obtained to enable him to sever the bars to his window.

Then with a rope made of his blankets, he got down to the ground, and watching his opportunity, picked the locks of the big gate and got away.

When his absence from his cell was discovered, it was too late, for he had made his way out of the yard, and was beyond pursuit.

Then it was wondered how he could have got possession of files and saws; but the keeper soon found this out, for in smoking one of the segars he came across a file, and then knew how he had been tricked.

It was lucky for Dick that he had gone to work when he had, for the delay of another day would have been fatal to him.

Hal, in his disguise as a drunken Chinaman, kept a watch upon Reilly's house, and saw that Dick did not attempt to escape.

The latter saw the drunken Asiatic lying on the bench, but had no suspicion that it was one of his enemies.

Hal had been in his station for an hour or so, when he saw a negro approaching, dressed in a very gorgeous get-up—quite the dandy, in fact.

As the sable Adonis passed the young man, he made a

sign, which the other understood, for he paused, as if to gaze contemptuously at the object before him.

"Cousin Jack?" said Hal.

"Yes."

"Our man is in the house opposite—the wash-house—up in the garret."

"All right. If he leaves before I come back, follow him."

Then Jack sauntered off, and in about ten minutes Hal saw him come back on the other side of the street, and enter the shop of the Irishman.

"Say, Mistah Chinee, how much you charge fo' dem linen shirts, ruffle bosom and collar?"

"I don't wash for naygurs," answered Paddy.

"You's a Chinee, you is. Yah—yah! Carry de hod an' wait on de high-toned cullud folkses."

"Git out, ye smoked Chinaman! I'm a dacint mon. I only takes in wurruk for the best soci'ty."

"Don' keep a bo'din'-house for escaped burglars, does ya?"

Paddy gave a start, but quickly recovering himself, he said:

"Are ye in want of accommodations? Phy don't ye go to the jail? It's ch'aper there."

"Dere's a fr'en' o' mine stayin' in dis yer house, what his name am Blue Dick, an' I wants ter see him bad."

"Ye're a liar, so ye are."

"Ts a liar, is I? Spoke softly, chile. I totes a razor in my boot."

"Thin go cut yer t'roat wid it. I'll pay yez well fur the job, begorrah."

Jack went to the door and whistled softly.

The diminutive pugilist introduced in our first chapter answered the signal, and Jack spoke a few words to him.

"Look a-here, cully," said he to Paddy, "my name's Tommy Long, the boxer."

"It ought to be Sammy Short, thin, be the same token. Is it the socks ye want done up? Faix! I don't wash for childher."

"I'm a goin' up stairs to see a man what I know—understand?"

"Ye're not doin' anything o' the kind. Ye're a-standin' there, luckin' loike ye war picked afore ye had yer growth."

"I are got it, an' don't yer forgit it, neither; an' I am goin' up stairs."

"Ye're not; ye'll stay where ye are."

"I tell yer I'm goin' up."

"An' I say ye're not."

"Do yer want me to put a head on yer?"

"No, for I have wan already."

"I'll give yer another."

He was as good as his word, for, suddenly sailing into the big Irishman, he gave him a blow under the ear which felled him to the floor.

Then he darted toward the stairs, followed by Jack, and two men who had been doing nothing particular the moment before, but who were special detectives, and had been watching for the opportunity thus afforded.

Paddy picked himself up, and began berating the frightened girls for not having prevented the men from going up stairs.

"Begorra, I'll give him a warnin' yet," he said, running to the mouth of a speaking-tube near at hand.

"No you won't," said a voice, and Mike Holcraft, seizing Paddy by the top-knot, pulled him away from the tube.

"Saw, don't I want to give ordhers to me washers?" said Paddy. "Don't meddle wid me business, Mike."

"Ye're a dirty loafer, Paddy Reilly, harborin' burglars. I warn that'll turn Chinee wud do any mane thing ye'd name. I'm disgusted wid ye, Paddy."

"Be off wid ye now, afore I get mad an' paralyze ye."

"I'm a-waitin'," said Mike, folding his arms.

"I'll tell yez whin I'm ready. Faix, ye luk purty enough to smash a photograph machine."

"Hark!" said Mike. "Phat's that?"

"It sounds like fire-crackers."

"It's a pistol, begorrah, an' there's a foight goin' an! Faix, I'm in it, every time. Hurroo!" and up stairs dashed the excited vigilant like a loose tornado.

CHAPTER XI.

A BATTLE OF BLOWS IN THE GARRET.

JACK, Tommy Long and the officers rushed pell mell up the creaking stairs, making a terrible clatter, but the man above did not hear them until they reached the landing below him.

Then he knew that he was being hunted, and started to get out of the window and upon the next house; but a shot from Hal gave him warning that such an attempt would be dangerous and he gave it up.

Then he thought that he might escape by one of the back windows, and made a dash for the door and across the hall.

Tommy Long saw him and let fly a shot at him which cut off a piece of his ear and buried itself in a beam overhead.

Dick threw out one of his tremendous feet, and striking Tom under the chin sent him back against Jack, and both rolled down stairs carrying the officers with them.

They made another sally, and by this time Mike Holcraft had arrived, shouting like a demon.

In the interior Dick had reached the rear window, and stepping out upon the eaves had crossed over to the next house.

Here he met with a warm reception, totally unexpected.

Tom Sykes, California Ned and Omaha Oll were having a game of "cutthroat euchre" in the room, and when the window sash was suddenly kicked in and a man appeared, they jumped to their feet as if shot.

Their shooters were in their fists instant, and for about two minutes they peppered the luckless villain with more vigor than precision.

"Give it to him!" yelled Ned.

"You will stop the game just when I've got a full hand, will you!" added Sam, putting a bullet through the man's hat.

"By jinks! It's that cussed old thief! Pepper and salt him," roared Oll, hitting the rogue in the shoulder.

"Hold up—hold up!" cried Dick. "Fair play! Three ter one's too much. There's a lot of my gang back there, sail into them!"

Then he disappeared from the window, and dropping over the ledge began to climb down by the waste pipe which led outside.

Ned rushed to the one window just as Mike, Jack and the others appeared at the other.

Mistaking them for thieves, he fired his last shot at Jack, knocking his negro wig off.

"Halloo—halloo, there! mind what you are about!" said Mike. "There's the fellow below there, Blue Dick. We are officers."

Dick was by this time more than half-way down, and sliding along as fast as he was able.

Mike let fly at him and hit him in the hand.

Dick's hold gave out, and he slid down with a rush, falling all in a heap upon a pile of old tubs set out to dry.

Down they came with a rattle and covered him up, while Paddy Reilly ran out of his wash-house to see what was the matter.

A glancing bullet, fired by Jack, cut his red topknot off as neatly as a razor would have done, doing him no further injury.

Paddy, however, roared out at the top of his voice that he was killed, and all the laundry-girls came rushing out in a body to see what was the matter, while a sly celestial, not Hal, seeing the coast clear, slipped in and stole a couple of dozen of the finest shirts in the place; and tucking them under his blouse, immediately "hooked it" down the street.

Those above, finding that their prisoner had escaped, or was likely to do so, fired a volley at the tubs, which scattered the girls in a moment, and then hastened down stairs in force.

Had it not been for the seriousness of the occasion all the actors could have laughed heartily at the many ludicrous things which had happened, but just at that time they were too busy to think of that.

The girls ran screaming into the house, and discovering the loss of the shirts, set up a doleful howl, while Paddy's wife, who had appeared during the *melee*, abused them soundly for their negligence.

The men above had disappeared from the window when Dick crawled out from under one of the biggest tubs, his nose bleeding, his eye blackened, clothes torn, hands cut and scratched, face dirty, and presenting, altogether, a most woe-begone appearance.

"Why didn't you tell me they were coming, Paddy?" he asked, in a tone of reproach.

"Faix, didn't I try, and didn't they stop me? Hurry out of this now, or they'll catch ye."

"Where'll I go to?"

"Over the fence and into the lumber yard. Oh, begorra! what's got wid your throat?"

The collar of Dick's shirt was torn wide open, disclosing a vivid red line, about as wide as the thickness of a man's finger, all around his throat. This was what had startled the Irishman, as he thought at first that Dick had had his throat cut.

"That," answered Dick, with a laugh; "oh, that's where the hangman left his mark of affection."

"Were yez ever hung, Dick?"

"You bet, but it didn't kill me. Halloo! I hear them again; good-afternoon; I'll come again when I have more time."

Off he went like a shot, and flew over the fence as if he had possessed wings. He was safely hid away in a pile of lumber by the time the pursuers arrived, and they, not knowing whither he had gone, were obliged, for the present, at least, to give up the chase.

CHAPTER XII.

JACK TRAVIS GETS CAUGHT IN A TRAP.

BLUE DICK had once murdered a man in Texas, and being convicted, was sentenced to be hanged.

So he was, but owing to the connivance of his friends, the noose was so arranged that his neck was not broken.

Many thought he was cut down rather hastily, and it was reported that he was given to the doctors for dissection. Instead of that, he was resuscitated and stowed away until he recovered his strength. The mark of the rope was on his throat, however, and would remain there as long as

he lived, as a gentle reminder of what he had gone through. Dan knew of this mark, and consequently, if Dick were retaken, no disguise would suffice to screen him, as the tell-tale mark would reveal his identity at once. While the search for Dick was going on, Dan, in his capacity of sheriff, was by no means idle, and succeeded in arresting numerous offenders against the law, notably one or two dishonest gamblers, and a forger from New York, who thought he would be safe in such a far-away place as Denver.

Hal had gone to Leadville and was busy in the mines, an occasional letter acquainting his friends with the fact that he was doing exceedingly well.

Simon Hutchins, the prisoner whom Dan had taken in spite of the desire on the part of the mob to lynch him, as related in the opening chapter, was found guilty, and was hanged a month after the attempt to catch Dick.

Dan was sitting in his office one morning about ten days after this, when Joe Darrell came in.

"There's a party of horse-thieves and road-agents twenty miles up the river, Dan," he said, "and I think that Blue Dick is with them."

"Get Jack and a party of the boys and go after them," answered Dan, immediately. "I will follow and overtake you."

"Enough said," replied Joe, leaving the room.

At that moment, Jack Travis was in Tony Flaxman's conversing earnestly with a woman who had told him she had something of importance to tell.

"I live about ten miles from here," she said, "me and my man. He does odd jobs, and I go out as a nurse."

"Last night a man came into our place, and said he wanted something to eat and to stay until morning. I gave him his supper, and at bed-time put him in with George, one of my boys, thirteen years old he is, because there was no other place."

"This morning early, George came and woke me up—it wasn't sunrise—and said that the man was gone, taking with him a lot of money that the boy had saved."

"That wasn't all, for he said that when the man went to bed he had a blood-red mark all around his neck like a scar."

"Ha-ha, I know the man!" muttered Jack.

"My boy asked the man what made the mark, and he said that the Indians had tattooed him years ago when he was taken prisoner by them. That satisfied the boy and he went to sleep, but this morning he told me about it."

"I knew at once that the man was a murderer. Dick Dutton, my man said he used to be called, and that you were looking for him, so I just came and told you all about it."

"But, my good woman," answered Jack, "he must be far away by this time."

"No he isn't, for he told my boy last night that he was going fishing at the Forks, and wanted him to come along. Besides that, Gil Derry's eldest boy Tom, told me—as I set out, I met him in the road—that he had been fishing himself all night, and as he was coming away, saw the man I spoke of sittin' down to fish."

"Do you know where the place is?"

"Yes, and I'll show you. Have you got a horse?"

"Yes; and you?"

"Oh, I've got one, of course. I often ride. He's hitched just outside."

"You came in on horseback?"

"Certainly."

Jack had his own animal outside, and in a moment he had assisted the woman to mount, and springing upon the back of his steed, darted off, the woman at his side.

They soon left the city, and galloped along the rocky road, the mountain air blowing in their faces, and every nerve strained to the utmost.

Before long they were in the mountainous districts, but dashed on at the same rate, the woman's horse keeping pace with Jack's, and both going like the wind.

They had gone at least twenty miles, according to Jack's calculations, and still there was no river in sight, when suddenly the woman turned her head and said, excitedly:

"Look there! We are pursued by a band of horse-thieves."

Jack turned his head to look, when the woman tore the reins from his hands and gave a shout.

Instantly a shower of bullets rattled around Jack, and one of them striking the horse, caused him to stumble, throwing the rider over his head.

Before Jack could arise he was seized by a number of sinister-appearing men and dragged into a cavern in the rocks.

"What does this mean?" he asked.

"It means that you have been nicely caught by Indian Sal, the female brigand, and that we are going to string you up, as you have often served our comrades!"

CHAPTER XIII.

INDIAN SAL'S MISTAKE—TAMING A TIGRESS.

HARDLY had the astonishment consequent upon these words passed away, before a man stepped out from the rest and stood before Jack.

It was Blue Dick, the murderer.

"I didn't suppose you could be taken in so easily, Jack," said Dick, with a laugh, "but Sal swore that she would bring you here, and so she has."

"Yes, and you won't get away, either," said the woman, herself advancing.

"Why have you deceived me in this way?" demanded Jack.

"Because I hate you!" hissed the woman. "Because I desire to be revenged upon you!"

"What have I done to you or yours that you should seek vengeance?"

"What have you done?" repeated the woman. "Didn't you shoot Mexican Joe, my husband?"

"No, he was shot by one of his own men. I was but a boy at the time."

"Didn't you kill Texas Jim, my brother?"

"No, he was drowned in the South Fork in a fight with Denver Dan."

"Perhaps you will say that you are not Denver Dan?"

"I certainly do say so."

"You can't fool me. I know who you are, and we are going to kill you this time, sure."

Jack's hands were not tied, and suddenly drawing out the silver whistle suspended around his neck, he rushed to the entrance of the cavern, and springing upon a huge boulder, blew with all his might.

The men dashed after him and dragged him into the cave, securing him hand and foot, and setting him down in a corner.

"Perhaps now you will say that you are not Denver Dan?" said the woman.

"Oh, I am anything you choose," said Jack, petulantly. "Go away, woman, you are a nuisance."

"Ho-ho-ho! now you've got it," roared Dick. "You might have known enough to let the man alone."

"But it is Dan?" she said.

"No; I described him to you because I wanted him. You were so crazy about getting Dan here that I put up a job on yer. Ye couldn't fool Dan like that if ye was to try a hundred years."

"And you have cheated me of my revenge!" kissed the woman, her dark eyes flashing fire. "You have tricked me—played with my deepest feelings. Beware!"

"Go away from me, woman, you're a nuisance!" said Dick, imitating Jack's tone, and then bursting into a coarse laugh, in which he was joined by the others.

The half savage creature rushed upon him with a knife in her hand, but Dick lifted one foot and sent the weapon flying to the other end of the cave.

Then seizing the woman by her wrist he whirled her around, and threw her upon a rude bench near where Jack was sitting, hissing, as he did so:

"Let me have none of your tigerish ways here, my beauty, or I'll let some of your bad blood out. I'm no Mexican to be spit at by an angry cat."

She glared at him furiously, and he continued:

"I'd as lief as not chuck you over the cliff for the coyotes an' vultures to feed on. D'ye think I care about you any more than to make a tool of ye? Not a bit. You helped me to escape from these hell hounds, and ye brought one of 'em here; that's all I want."

"Villain! You said you loved me—promised to be true."

"Maybe I did. So did you promise to love my brother Bob, and then you and your fine Mexican lover murdered him in his bed and took his money."

"It's a lie!"

"Is it a lie, too, when you got tired of the Mexican you ran away from him, and listened to someone else? You're half Indian blood—half devil's, that's what you are. Bah, I know all about you! As long as you behave yourself, and do what I tell you, I'll treat you decent, but if you git to showin' yer teeth, I'll pull 'em!"

"Miserable villain, do you dare to threaten me? I, who have the blood of kings in my veins?" shrieked the woman, rushing up to him in a fury.

Dick was not at all daunted by the tigerish ways of the woman, who was all he had described her, but with a brutal laugh he struck her across the face, and dashed her to the floor.

"Shame—shame, Dick," said one of the men, "don't be too hard on her."

"I ain't a bit too hard," he answered. "She's as bad as the very fiend. She has killed men while wrapping her dark arms about their necks; she's as false as the pit and as wicked as they make 'em. Confound her, all she wants is a feller to train her an' show her that she ain't no great shakes, after all. She'd kill any on ye as quick as wink."

"Then she'd better git," answered the man, "fur we don't want that kind around here, you bet!"

"Now," said Dick, "we've got this nice little deputy-sheriff, that has given us so much trouble, in our hands; and the best thing ter do is hang him!"

"Yes—hang him—hang him!" yelled they all.

"Denver Dan never bothered me much, but this fellow did. He peppered me nicely down thar in that Irishman's house, and now I'm going to settle his hash for him."

"So we will!" shouted the others.

Jack was lifted up and taken into an inner cavern, where a beam overhead, with a dangling noose suspended from it, showed that the preparations for the brave fellow's death had already been made.

"Pray Heaven that Dan has heard my signal!" murmured Jack, as he saw the hanging cord.

CHAPTER XIV.

A THREATENED DANGER—ABANDONED TO A HORRIBLE FATE—THE SHERIFF ARRIVES IN TIME—CONCLUSION.

JACK was placed upon an empty barrel under the beam, and the noose drawn snugly about his neck, the other end being fast over his head.

When all was ready the barrel would be kicked away, and he would be suspended a few inches from the floor, which would answer the same purpose as several feet.

His arms were tightly pinioned to his sides, and his feet tied together, so that it was impossible for him to help himself.

He knew that to make an appeal for mercy to such wretches would be in vain, but he trusted that Dan would come to his aid.

He did not know that at that moment Dan was galloping, at the head of a large party, in pursuit of Dick; unaware, however, how much his brave lieutenant stood in need of his assistance.

If he had, he would have prayed for delay with all his might.

The preparations for Jack's execution took some little time, but at last all was ready and Blue Dick stood ready to give an order which would consign the poor fellow to a disgraceful death.

"Now," says Dick, "when I count three give the barrel a kick. One—two——"

At the instant, before he could pronounce the fatal word, a man rushed in, his face pale with fear.

"The magazine!" he shrieked; "that she-devil has laid a train and fired it! We will all be blown to atoms!"

Dick dashed into the outer cavern followed by all of the men, and discovered that the man had only spoken the truth.

The magazine was closed by a heavy door of oak which the furious woman had shut, and the key to which she had taken.

While the men were inside attending to Jack she had laid a train leading under the door and connecting with a slow fuse inside the magazine.

Closing and locking the door she had set fire to the train and then hastily departed, but one of the men had gone into the outer cavern, for some purpose or other, just in time to see the fire creep under the door and hear the hissing of the fuse.

He had instantly given the alarm, and the villains, overpowered with fear, and knowing well that nothing could save them, rushed madly from the spot, where to remain was death.

They rushed down the pass, and suddenly someone said:

"The prisoner! what will become of him?"

"He'll escape hanging to be blown up!" said Dick, with a frightful laugh.

What an alternative!

"Shall we go back for him?"

"No; let him die. He won't bother us any more!"

Hark!

What is that sound that suddenly strikes upon the ears of the villains?

An explosion?

No.

What then?

The tramp of horsemen sounding sharp on the flinty road.

Who is it?

The answer comes in a moment.

Denver Dan and his party dash into sight, and seeing the villains, sweep upon them with a wild shout.

Shouts, pistol shots, groans and cries of agony ring out upon the air, and Blue Dick falls to the earth with a bullet in his brain.

The fierce woman is avenged, for it is her hand that has sent the bullet to its mark.

"Ride as you never rode before!" she screams; "your comrade is in peril. The cave, quick, or he is lost!"

Then she puts the pistol to her own head and fires.

"What can she mean?" asked Dan, as he gazed upon the corpse before him.

One of the outlaws quickly explains.

"Wait for me below," says Dan, "I must save Jack, whatever the risk!"

He spurs his noble steed onward, the ground fairly flying beneath his feet.

Meanwhile, Jack, left alone, realized the awful doom that awaited him, having heard all that had passed between the robbers.

He could not free himself from his dreadful position, for if he fell from the barrel he would be strangled.

If he remained he would be blown to pieces.

He could move neither hand nor foot, and the noose was fixed so tightly about his neck that he could not release his head.

If he should spring from the barrel his neck would be broken, for the cord above him was too short for him to hope to snap it.

If the noose had not been tightened he might, perhaps, roll to the floor without hurting himself, and perhaps crawl far enough away to escape the worst of the danger.

There is no hope for him, however, and a horrible fate is swiftly approaching.

He cannot tell how long the fuse was intended to burn, and thus his anxiety is doubled, expecting every moment to be his last.

It is a fearful predicament in which to be placed.

As he stands there he hears shouts and the report of firearms, and knows not what to think.

"It is Dan coming to my aid," he murmurs.

What if he should be too late?

He waits a minute, perhaps, though it seems an hour, and then the clatter of horse's hoofs is heard coming nearer and nearer.

They enter the cave, the entrance is darkened, a knife flashes before his face, he is grasped in someone's arms, the horse turns, dashes out of the cave again and down the pass with the speed of an arrow.

What sound is that?

A dull roar, a tremor of the earth, another roar, and then the air is filled with flying fragments and a strong smell of gunpowder.

The magazine had exploded.

None too soon was Dan, for the huge masses of rock now lie piled all around the cavern and for many rods beyond.

Half a minute's delay would have caused the death of both men, even though they were out of the cavern.

Dan did not put Jack upon his feet until fully two miles had been traversed, so great was his haste.

"Thank God!" said Jack, devoutly. "You have again saved my life."

"If I hadn't, I could not have survived you, Jack," says Dan, between whom and his handsome lieutenant there had long been the closest friendship.

Nothing remains to be told, the outlaws having been captured and their leader slain; so for the present, and until we have occasion to recount his further remarkable adventures, as we may do, let us take leave of our gallant friend, DENVER DAN THE SHERIFF.

[THE END.]

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